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Cc: []
From: CN=Hanady Kader/OU=R10/O=USEPA/C=US
Sent: Mon 4/2/2012 4:31:01 PM
Subject: Alaska Dispatch: Thanks for FMI support of EPA's Pebble Mine Study
Commentary
spoken up to support
commentary(at)alaskadispatch.com

<http://www.alaskadispatch.com/article/thanks-retail-grocers-supporting-epas-pebble-mine-study>

Commentary

Thanks to retail grocers for supporting EPA's Pebble mine study
Alexus Kwachka | Mar 31, 2012

As an Alaskan and a commercial fisherman, I was delighted to read the news last week that the Food Marketing Institute (FMI) has spoken up to support a scientific study, under way by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, to assess the impacts of large scale mining (including Pebble Mine) on Bristol Bay's fishery.

When placed in context, I must at admit, I was hardly surprised to see this support. After all, Bristol Bay provides nearly half the global sockeye catch and is the largest salmon ecosystem of its kind left on the planet. After over 150 years of fishing these waters, the fishery remains robust and well-managed. If cared for, it can continue to provide for Bristol Bay, for Alaska, for America and the world for generations to come. Whereas a large scale mine is a finite resource with limited benefits and endless costs. Bristol Bay's commercial fishery employs upwards of 12,000 people -- Bristol Bay residents, Alaskans, and Americans. And it supplies a very large food industry: Seafood processors, distributors, re-processors, retailers and restaurants. This really is a food and job security issue.

To see FMI, which represents 26,000 retail food stores, and \$680 billion in annual revenue -- three-quarters of U.S. retail food store sales -- express support for this study is no surprise at all. After all, FMI is invested in the economies of Alaska and the jobs tethered to Bristol Bay. These numbers and its voice are ample evidence that the impacts of Bristol Bay extend well beyond our waters or state's borders.

FMI's statement is simple and logical. It supports a scientific review of the potential impacts of large scale developments on the waters of Bristol Bay. Who wouldn't support a scientific assessment of large scale projects like Pebble before the first shovel of dirt is disturbed? This study by EPA will be peer-reviewed by outside experts. This is the way we should handle all major development projects, especially if they could impact other economic engines of the state.

Moreover, FMI's applause of EPA's work in Bristol Bay validates the concerns and voices of Bristol Bay residents and Alaskans keeping a close eye on the proposed Pebble Mine. After all, one must remember it was that leaders of Bristol Bay, including Bristol Bay Native Corporation, tribes of the region, the Bristol Bay Regional Seafood Development Association, and a host of others who asked the EPA to examine the potential impacts of Pebble on Bristol Bay's renewable natural assets. I for one, then, welcome input from all perspectives -- but particularly so from those benefiting from existing economic development of the area's durable resources.

The waters of Bristol Bay are the lifeblood of our industry. As fishermen, we are proud of the sustainably harvested wild salmon that we provide to the nation, and we appreciate the Food Marketing Institute's support for this important scientific assessment.

Alexus Kwachka is a resident of Kodiak, a Bristol Bay Fisherman, and a member of the Advisory Panel to the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council.

The views expressed here are the writer's own and are not necessarily endorsed by Alaska Dispatch. Alaska Dispatch welcomes a broad range of viewpoints. To submit a piece for consideration, e-mail commentary(at)alaskadispatch.com.

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